

# Najdi Arabic

**Najdi Arabic** (Arabic: اللهجة النجدية) is the group of Arabic varieties originating from the Najd region of Saudi Arabia. As a result of migration, several regions outside of Najd, including Eastern, Al Jawf, Najran, and Northern Borders Regions are now mostly Najdi-speaking. Outside of Saudi Arabia, it is also the main Arabic variety spoken in the Syrian Desert of Iraq, Jordan, and Syria (with the exception of Palmyra oasis and settlements dotting the Euphrates, where Mesopotamian Arabic is spoken) as well as the westernmost part of Kuwait.

Najdi Arabic can be divided into four region-based groups:

1. Northern Najdi, spoken in Ha'il Region and Al-Qassim Region in the Najd.<sup>[3][4]</sup>
2. Mixed northern-central Najdi of Al-Qassim<sup>[4][5]</sup>
3. Central Najdi (Urban Najdi), spoken in the city of Riyadh and surrounding towns and farming communities.<sup>[4][3]</sup>
4. Southern Najdi, spoken in the city of Al-Kharj and surrounding towns, and in the Rub' al-Khali.<sup>[4]</sup>

<b>Contents</b>
<b>Phonology</b>
Consonants
Vowels
Morphology
Negation
<b>See also</b>
<b>Footnotes</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>
<b>Further reading</b>

Najdi Arabic	
<b>Native to</b>	Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Iraq, Syria
<b>Native speakers</b>	4.05 million (2011-2015) <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Language family</b>	Afro-Asiatic <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Semitic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Central Semitic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Arabic<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Peninsular<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Najdi Arabic</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Writing system</b>	Arabic alphabet
Language codes	
<b>ISO 639-3</b>	ars
<b>Glottolog</b>	najd1235 ( <span>http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/najd1235</span> ) <sup>[2]</sup>

## Phonology

### Consonants

Here is a table of the consonant sounds of Najdi Arabic. The phonemes /p/ ⟨**پ**⟩ and /v/ ⟨**ف**⟩ (not used by all speakers) are not considered to be part of the phonemic inventory, as they exist only in foreign words and can be pronounced as /b/ and /f/ respectively depending on the speaker.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Consonants<sup>[7][8]</sup>

		<u>Labial</u>	<u>Inter-Dental</u>	<u>Denti-alveolar</u>		<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Pharyngeal</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
				plain	emphatic				
<u>Nasal</u>		<u>m</u>		<u>n</u>					
<u>Stop</u>	<u>voiceless</u>	(p)		<u>t</u>	<u>tˤ</u>		<u>k</u>		<u>ʔ</u>
	<u>voiced</u>	<u>b</u>		<u>d</u>		<u>d̪</u>	<u>g</u>		
<u>Fricative</u>	<u>voiceless</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>θ</u>	<u>s</u>	<u>sˤ</u>	<u>ʃ</u>	<u>x~χ</u>	<u>ħ</u>	<u>h</u>
	<u>voiced</u>	(v)	<u>ð</u>	<u>z</u>	<u>ðˤ</u>		<u>ɣ~ʕ</u>	<u>ʕ</u>	
<u>Trill</u>				<u>r</u>					
<u>Approximant</u>				<u>l</u>	(ɭ)	<u>j</u>	<u>w</u>		

Phonetic notes:

- /g/ is the modern reflex of Classical /q/ <ق>, though /q/ can appear in a few loanwords from Modern Standard Arabic and proper names, as in القرآن [alqurˤʔaːn] ('Quran') and قانون [qaːnuːn] ('law').<sup>[8]</sup>
- The distinction between the Classical Arabic <ض> and <ظ> was completely lost in Najdi Arabic, and both are realised as /ðˤ/.<sup>[9]</sup> /tˤ/ is sometimes voiced.<sup>[7]</sup>
- As in many other the marginal phoneme /ɭ/ only occurs in the word الله /aɭːaːh/ ('god') and words derived from it, it contrasts with /l/ in والله /waɭːa/ ('I swear') vs. وألاً /walːa/ ('or'), but it occurs as an allophone of /l/ in many other contexts, especially when neighboring the phonemes /g, x, sˤ, tˤ/ e.g. قلم ('pencil') /galam/ → [gaɭam].
- The phonemes /ɣ/ <غ> and /x/ <خ> can be realised as uvular fricatives [ɣ] and [χ] respectively.
- Northern and central dialects feature affricates [tˤs] and [d̪z] as allophonic variants of the velar stops /k/ and /g/, respectively, particularly in the context of front vowels e.g. كلب [tˤsalb] ('dog').<sup>[10][9][11]</sup> Dialect leveling as a result of influence from the Riyadh-based prestige varieties has led to the affricate allophones becoming increasingly less common among younger speakers.<sup>[11]</sup>
- Historically, /ʔ/ was deleted. It now appears only in borrowings from Classical Arabic; word-medially, this deletion comes along with the lengthening of short vowels.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Vowels

Vowels of Najdi Arabic<sup>[13][14]</sup>

	<u>Front</u>		<u>Central</u>		<u>Back</u>	
	short	long	short	long	short	long
<u>Close</u>	ɪ	iː			ʊ	uː
<u>Mid</u>		eː				oː
<u>Open</u>			a	aː		

Unless adjacent to /ɣ x h ħ ʕ/, /a/ is raised in open syllables to [i], [ɨ], or [u], depending on neighboring sounds.<sup>[15]</sup> Remaining /a/ may become fronted to [æ~ɛ] in the context of front sounds, as well as adjacent to the pharyngeals /ħ ʕ/.<sup>[16]</sup>

Najdi Arabic exhibits the so-called gahawa syndrome, insertion of epenthetic /a/ after (/h x, ɣ ħ, ʕ/). For example, [gahwah] > [gahawah].

When short /a/ appears in an open syllable that is followed by a nonfinal light syllable, it is deleted. For example, /saħab-at/ is realized as [s'ħa.bat].<sup>[17]</sup> This, combined with the gahawa syndrome can make underlying sequence of /a/ and a following guttural consonant (/h x, ɣ ħ, ʕ/) to appear metathesized, e.g. /ʕistaʕʒal/ ('got in a hurry') [ʕist'ʕaʒal].<sup>[18]</sup>

Short high vowels are deleted in non-final open syllables, such as /tirsil-uːn/ ('you [m. sg.] send') [tirs'luːn].<sup>[19]</sup>

There is both limited distributional overlap and free variation between [i] and [u], with the latter being more likely in the environment of bilabials, pharyngealized consonants, and /r/.<sup>[7]</sup>

The mid vowels /eː oː/ are typically monophthongs, though they can be pronounced as diphthongs when preceding a plosive, e.g. /beːt/ ('house') [beit].<sup>[16]</sup> [ei]

## Morphology

Najdi Arabic sentence structure can have the word order VSO and SVO, however, VSO usually occurs more often. Ingham (1994:37-44) NA morphology is distinguished by three categories which are: nouns *ism*, verb *fial*, and particle *harf*. *Ism* means name in Arabic and it corresponds to nouns and adjectives in English. *Fial* means action in Arabic and it corresponds to verbs. *Harf* means letter and corresponds to pronouns, demonstratives, prepositions, conjunctions and articles.

Verbs are inflected for number, gender, person, tense, aspect and transitives. Nouns shows number (singular and plural) and gender (masculine and feminine).<sup>[20]</sup>

Complementizers in NA have three different classes which are: relative particle, declarative particle, and interrogative particles. The three different complementizers that are used in Najdi Arabic are: *illi*, *in*, *itha*.<sup>[21]</sup>

## Negation

Two particles are used in negation, which are: *ma* and *la*. These particles come before the verb in verbal sentences. Ingham (1994:37-44) *ma* is used with all verbal sentences but *la* is used with imperative verb forms indicating present and future tense.<sup>[20]</sup>

## See also

---

- Varieties of Arabic
- Peninsular Arabic

## Footnotes

---

1. "Arabic, Najdi Spoken" (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/ars>). *Ethnologue*. Retrieved 2018-08-08.
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Najdi Arabic" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/najd1235>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Ingham (1986), p. 274.
4. Al Motairi (2015), p. 4.
5. Ingham (1994), p. 5.
6. Al Motairi (2015:5)
7. Ingham (1994), p. 14.
8. Al Motairi (2015), p. 6.
9. Al Motairi (2015), p. 7.
10. Ingham (1986), p. 274, 278.
11. Al-Rojaie (2013), p. 46.
12. Ingham (1994), p. 13.
13. Ingham (1994), p. 15.
14. Al Motairi (2015), p. 8.
15. McCarthy (2007:177, 178), citing Al-Mozainy (1981:64ff)
16. Ingham (1994), p. 15.
17. McCarthy (2007), pp. 181.
18. McCarthy (2007), pp. 205.
19. McCarthy (2007), pp. 187.
20. Allothman, Ebtesam (2012). "Digital Vernaculars: An Investigation of Najdi Arabic in Multilingual Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication" (<http://home.uchicago.edu/~robertlewis/writings/thesis.pdf>) (PDF). *University of Manchester*: 96–121.
21. Lewis Jr., Robert (2013). "Complementizer Agreement in Najdi Arabic" (<http://home.uchicago.edu/~robertlewis/writings/thesis.pdf>) (PDF). *University of Kansas*: 22.

## Bibliography

---

- Al-Rojaie, Y. (2013), "Regional dialect leveling in Najdi Arabic: The case of the deaffrication of [k] in the Qaṣīmī dialect", *Language Variation and Change*, **25** (1): 43–63, doi:10.1017/s0954394512000245 (<https://doi.org/10.1017%2Fs0954394512000245>)
- Al Motairi, Sarah Soror (2015), *An Optimality-Theoretic Analysis of Syllable Structure in Qassimi Arabic* (<http://commons.emich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1991&context=theses>)
- Ingham, Bruce (1986), "Notes on the Dialect of the Āl Murra of Eastern and Southern Arabia", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, **49** (2): 271–291, doi:10.1017/s0041977x00024162 (<https://doi.org/10.1017%2Fs0041977x00024162>)
- Ingham, Bruce (1994), *Najdi Arabic: Central Arabian*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, ISBN 9789027238016

- McCarthy, John J. (2007), *Hidden Generalizations: Phonological Opacity in Optimality Theory*, London: Equinox Publishing Ltd., [ISBN 9781845530518](#)

## Further reading

---

- P.F. Abboud. 1964. "The Syntax of Najdi Arabic", University of Texas PhD dissertation.
  - Al-Mozainy, Hamza Q (1981). *Vowel Alternations in a Bedouin Hijazi Arabic Dialect: Abstractness and Stress* (Thesis). Austin, Texas: University of Texas, Austin.
- 

Retrieved from "[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Najdi\\_Arabic&oldid=956292394](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Najdi_Arabic&oldid=956292394)"

---

**This page was last edited on 12 May 2020, at 15:17 (UTC).**

Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.